

FARM ANIMAL WELFARE COUNCIL

PRESS STATEMENT

December 5, 1979

In his statements on 25th July and 4th December, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food announced that the terms of reference of the Farm Animal Welfare Council would be to keep under review the welfare of farm animals on agricultural land, at markets, in transit and at the place of slaughter, and to advise the Agricultural Ministers of any legislative or other changes that may be necessary. The Council is free to publicise its views and will do so whenever, as now, circumstances make it appropriate. Ministers have asked the Council to advise as speedily as possible on revisions to the Welfare Codes for Cattle, Pigs, Domestic Fowls and Turkeys and to undertake this revision in such a way as to reflect advances in scientific knowledge and husbandry practice since the Brambell Committee reported in 1965. In preparing revisions of these Codes, the Council will build on the valuable work already done by the Farm Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, now disbanded.

The Codes are not mandatory but intended to create the best possible standards of welfare for animals in all systems of livestock husbandry, both intensive and extensive. The Council wishes the revised Codes to provide farm animals with the following:-

- (1) freedom from thirst, hunger or malnutrition;
- (2) appropriate comfort and shelter;
- (3) prevention, or rapid diagnosis and treatment, of injury and disease;
- (4) freedom to display most normal patterns of behaviour;
- (5) freedom from fear.

The Codes are intended to contain more specific recommendations than formerly and should, in particular, place more emphasis on behavioural needs.

The Council may not necessarily be able to endorse every husbandry practice used on livestock farms but, until changes can be achieved, believes that it is in the interest of the animals to continue to give advice on the best possible management within those systems.

In addition to advising on revisions of the Codes, the Council will give careful consideration to the adequacy of farm animal welfare legislation in all the areas to which its remit extends, on the farm, in markets, during domestic transport, during export and at the place of slaughter.

Throughout its work the Council recognises the need for increased knowledge of the physiological and behavioural needs of farm animals, and, where research and development on this work appears to be insufficient, it will ask for work to be undertaken. Moreover, the Council also accepts that animal welfare raises certain points of ethics which are themselves beyond scientific investigation. The Council will therefore especially wish to encourage alternative systems of livestock husbandry which are ethically acceptable to the concerned public, can be shown to improve the welfare of the livestock in question and be economically competitive with existing systems of intensive production.

The Council will take a close interest in the work of the Standing Committee set up under the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes. Welfare developments in the E.E.C. are also a matter of interest to the Council which will keep itself informed so that it can offer advice to Ministers as appropriate. In this, and in all its other tasks, the Council is free to publicise its views and is accessible to any organisation or individuals.

Enquiries and correspondence should be addressed to the Secretary, Mr. R. Townsend, Farm Animal Welfare Council, Government Buildings, Hook Rise South, Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey, KT6 7NF (01-337 6611, ext. 583).